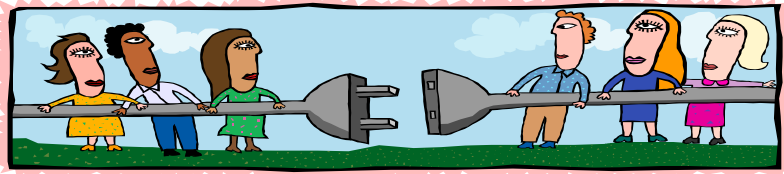


Consumer Connection



Informed Consumers, Quality Utility Services, and a Dedicated Organization for Missourians in the 21st Century

Issue 5 - January 2003

A quarterly publication of the Missouri Public Service Commission
Public Information & Education Department

Greetings from Chair Kelvin Simmons:



As 2003 begins, we want to remind Missourians that the Missouri Public Service Commission is here to serve you.

If you have an inquiry or complaint regarding a utility company that provides service to you, we ask that you first contact them to see if your issue can be resolved. If, through that contact, you are not able to resolve the issue, I invite you to contact the Public Service Commission using our toll-free hotline number (1-800-392-4211). That will put you in contact with a consumer services specialist who will work with you and the company to try and resolve your issue.

Through the efforts of our Consumer Services Department, Missouri consumers saved more than \$361,000 during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2002. Over the past six years, those savings total over \$1.3 million.

Our Consumer Services Department does an outstanding job of working with Missouri consumers and those companies under our jurisdiction to try and resolve disputes. Remember our toll-free hotline number (1-800-392-4211) the next time you have a question or complaint you were not able to resolve with your utility company.

CONSUMER INFORMATION

There's a new tab on the block -- go to the PSC website: www.psc.state.mo.us and click on the CONSUMER INFORMATION tab. Several new pieces that might interest you include:

- ✓ Lifeline Link-Up Programs
- ✓ A Snapshot of What We Do
- ✓ Budget Billing
- ✓ Be Prepared in Case of An Emergency
- ✓ Be Safe Around Electricity
- ✓ Changing Utility Service When Moving
- ✓ Cold Weather Rule
- ✓ Natural Gas Safety Tips
- ✓ Setting Your Thermostat
- ✓ Some Facts About Natural Gas Rates
- ✓ Water Conservation
- ✓ Winter Service Disconnections

CONSUMER INFORMATION

PSC hearings go LIVE!!

Commission hearings held in Room 310 of the Governor Office Building can be viewed live on the PSC Webcast. This new technology can be accessed by going to the PSC's webpage www.psc.state.mo.us. Once you access the webpage, simply click on WEBCAST on the right side of the page. The Live Video Webcast page contains system requirements and basic instructions on how to receive PSC hearings live. As the database of hearing videos grows, an archive of previous hearings will also be available on the Commission's webpage.



You may also view a monthly hearing schedule from this area, or return to the main page and click on Hearing Schedule. The Hearing Schedule is posted weekly and gives you a more in-depth description of the nature of the hearing.

**Hearing
Schedule**

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning - Know the Dangers

Carbon monoxide is the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in America, according to the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Carbon monoxide is a flammable, colorless, tasteless, odorless toxic gas produced during incomplete combustion of fuel - natural gas, oil, coal, wood, kerosene, etc.



Carbon monoxide can escape from any fuel-burning appliance, furnace, water heater, fireplace, woodstove, or space heater.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include dizziness or fatigue, headache, confusion, disorientation, nausea or vomiting, shortness of breath or irregular breathing.

What you can do:

- Install a carbon monoxide detector.
- Examine vents and chimneys for improper connections, rust and stains.
- Have your fuel burning appliances inspected by a qualified technician.
- Be aware of warning signals that could indicate improper appliance installation, such as decreased hot water supply, sooting and a furnace that is unable to heat the house.

(Sources: Kansas City Star and www.homesafe.com)



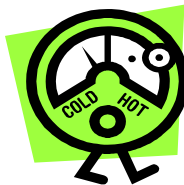
Be Prepared in Case of An Emergency:

Many times we ask ourselves what would we do if there was an emergency. Here are a few tips to make sure that you are as comfortable as possible in case you find yourself and/or your family without utility services.

- ✗ If someone in your home is dependent on electric-powered, life-sustaining medical equipment, check with your utility provider about back-up power sources.
- ✗ Make arrangements for the care of infants, the elderly or disabled.
- ✗ Stock up on non-perishable food (canned meats and vegetables).
- ✗ Keep a flashlight, battery operated radio, extra batteries and candles on hand.
- ✗ Keep a supply of drinking water in case the water supply is contaminated.
- ✗ Keep a list of phone numbers for police, fire and emergency personnel.
- ✗ Develop an evacuation plan in case you have to leave your home.
- ✗ Call relatives or emergency officials if you need a place to stay.
- ✗ Keep your car fueled in case there is a need to evacuate the area.
- ✗ Consider keeping a small amount of cash on hand. An extended power outage may prevent you from withdrawing money from banks or automated teller machines.

Setting Your Thermostat

A thermostat is a temperature-sensitive switch that controls a furnace or air conditioner. When the indoor temperature drops below or rises above the thermostat setting, your furnace or air conditioner runs to warm or cool the house air to the setting you selected. Most thermostats must be manually adjusted to change the indoor air temperature.



Some Common Misconceptions

MYTH: A furnace works harder than normal to warm the space back to a comfortable temperature after the thermostat has been set back, resulting in little or no savings.

FACT: The fuel required to reheat a building to a comfortable temperature is roughly equal to the fuel saved as the building drops to the lower temperature. You save fuel between the time that the temperature stabilizes at the lower level and the next time heat is needed.

MYTH: The higher you raise a thermostat, the more heat the furnace will put out, or the house will warm up faster if the thermostat is raised higher.

FACT: Furnaces put out the same amount of heat no matter how high the thermostat is set — the variable is how long it must stay on to reach the set temperature.

How To Save Energy Costs

► You can easily save energy in the winter by setting the thermostat to a comfortable temperature when you're at home and awake, and lowering it to a cooler, but acceptable, temperature when you're asleep or away. This plan is effective and inexpensive if you are willing to adjust the thermostat by hand and wake up in a slightly cooler home.

► If you have a programmable thermostat, you can set it to automatically make these adjustments at different times during the day to match your typical behavior and maximize your savings with a minimum amount of effort.

Unintentional 9-1-1 dialing

The FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau has released a new Consumer Alert www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/unint911.html addressing the serious problem of unintentional 911 emergency calls being made from wireless phones that have been pre-programmed with a 911 speed dial button. Public safety officials throughout the country have estimated that up to 70% of their calls from wireless phones are unintentional, clogging up their phone lines and risking their ability to respond to real emergencies.

The problem occurs when a wireless phone is pre-programmed to call 911, especially "candy bar" types of wireless phones (with an open-faced design), bumps up against some item, or a key on the keypad is accidentally pressed while in the user's purse, briefcase, pocket, or on his or her belt.

For more information on this problem and how to avoid it, visit the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau's (CGB) Website, www.fcc.gov/cgb. Also, visit the FCC Wireless Bureau's Website, wireless.fcc.gov/, for further information and a copy of the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau Staff Report, "Prevention of Unintentional Wireless 911 Calls," DA 02-3413, released December 11, 2002.

To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, click on:

www.fcc.gov/cgb/emailservice.html

(Source: Federal Communications Commission website)

For printed materials regarding a number of consumer issues or copies of this newsletter, please call 573-751-7491 or email joyceneuner@psc.state.mo.us

Who to Contact:

Missouri Public Service Commission
Consumer Hotline **1-800-392-4211**
or email: pscinfo@psc.state.mo.us

Mail your inquiry or complaint to:

Missouri Public Service Commission
Consumer Services Department
P.O. Box 360
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0360

